



SOLIHULL

Chair of Governors

Candidate Information

Welcome

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as a member of the Governing Body at Solihull since 2011 and as Chair of Governors since 2022.

Solihull is a thriving, award-winning co-educational school with a proud tradition dating back to 1560. It provides life-changing educational opportunities for pupils aged 3–18.

I see our core values – Ambition, Opportunity and Community – reflected in all aspects of our school life. They are particularly visible in the achievements of our remarkable pupils, who come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and each has unique talents both inside and outside the classroom.

I have been truly fortunate to work alongside many talented and dedicated Board colleagues during my tenure. My successor will inherit a highly capable Governing Body with a wide variety of skills and experience, fully committed to Solihull's ongoing success.

The relationship between the Chair and the Headmaster is of paramount importance. Since his appointment in 2023, our Headmaster, Charles Fillingham, has been a strong, steadfast and trustworthy colleague, leading the school with skill and flair. It has been a rewarding experience to work alongside Charles and his Senior Leadership Team.

Solihull School is a special place, and I commend it, its rich past and its even stronger future to anyone considering the role of Chair.

In accordance with sound governance principles, I shall not have a formal role to play in the appointment of my successor. I shall, though, be available to assist in any way I can, both before and after their appointment.



Damian J Kelly
Chair of Governors



Head's Welcome

Welcome to Solihull School. Solihull is the leading academic independent co-educational day school in the Midlands. This has been a seat of learning for nearly 500 years, and Solihull is one of the great schools of England.

I recommend Solihull School as a fantastic place to work and learn. The sense of community and belonging is stronger here than in any other school I know. Naturally, I am also proud of the strong academic reputation, the excellent name that the school enjoys for pastoral care and the co-curricular offering, which is as good or better than you could find anywhere.

When I was first considering the opportunity here at Solihull, I was completely won over by the warmth of welcome that I found from my very first interaction with the school. I am pleased to lead a diverse and inclusive staff body, and I am delighted that you are considering joining the team as our next Chair of Governors.

You will lead a committed team of Governors. Each member of the Board is generous with

his or her time, and each member brings different skills, experiences and insights. Together, they make up an impressive group. I am in regular contact with the current Chair of Governors once a week by email and at other times by telephone or in person. Naturally, we have a strong working relationship of support and challenge.

Solihull School offers Infant, Junior, Senior and Sixth Form education across more than 60 acres on our two campuses in the centre of the town. This is an award-winning school. Our recipe for success is no secret; it comes from the habits established, the opportunities encountered, and the moments experienced by the children here. Solihull is a purposeful place where we work hard to get things right and to serve our community with kindness and care.

The role of Chair of Governors at Solihull School offers opportunities to be an influence for the good. We are a very large community of learners, parents, employees, Old Silhillians and others, and we will welcome you. I hope that you will consider applying for this special role.



Charles Fillingham
Executive Headmaster



About the School

Solihull is a leading 3–18 independent co-educational day school. Founded in 1560, the school moved to the current Warwick Road campus in 1882. Originally the Free Grammar School, Solihull became independent in 1946. The school admitted only boys until 1973, when girls joined the Sixth Form. It became fully co-educational in 2005.

Solihull merged with Saint Martin's School in September 2020. Solihull Preparatory School (ages 3–11) is based on the Saint Martin's campus, and Solihull Senior School (11–18 years) is based on the Warwick Road campus. The school currently has over 1,500 pupils: c. 450 at the Preparatory School and c. 1,100 at the Senior School. In addition, the school has two subsidiary trading companies, Solihull School Enterprises Limited, which oversees commercial lettings of the school's facilities, and Solihull Day Care Limited, a 51-week-a-year nursery business for children between 9 months and 5 years old.

Christian in its foundation, Solihull welcomes pupils of all faiths and none into a supportive and caring environment. The school also maintains strong links with former pupils and their associations.

The school's examination results are excellent; in 2025, 85% of A Level results were at grades A*–B. Almost all Upper Sixth students go on to their chosen university, and each year, the majority of pupils go on to Russell Group universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. Added-value results are also very strong, with the school placed in the top 1% of schools nationally for pupil progress. Over recent years, the school has been in receipt of a number

of awards, including, in 2024, "Independent School of the Year" at the Times Educational Supplement Awards and, in 2026, "West Midlands Independent Secondary School of the Year" by the Sunday Times Schools Guide. The school is also a Microsoft Showcase School and has recently hosted a range of festivals related to Shakespeare, artificial intelligence, engineering and languages.

Staff and pupils are ambitious and seek to maximise potential in one another. The school engenders an enduring thirst for learning and a sense of well-being. All members of the school community are encouraged to extend themselves beyond their immediate interests and perceived capabilities. New opportunities are welcomed and embraced, and all are encouraged to take risks and to learn from failure. Education is holistic, and independent thought, exploration and fun are essential elements of the Solihull experience.

The co-curricular aspect of the school is very important. Academic enrichment involves a wide range of clubs and societies, including Debating, the Equity Group and a Law Society. The school supports both a wide range of individual and team sports, with pupils often participating at the national level. In Music, over 600 individual/vocal lessons are given weekly, and there are many choirs, orchestras and other ensemble opportunities with regular concerts. The school is part of the Steinway initiative, benefiting from a partnership with Steinway Pianos. Within Performing Arts, Drama and Dance, performance opportunities culminate in many productions every year, including the annual school musical and dance showcase.

The school owns the David Fricke Mountain Cottage in Snowdonia, which supports its Outdoor Education activities, which also include a Combined Cadet Force contingent and Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. The final strand of the co-curricular programme centres on Community Relations, where pupils are encouraged to become engaged in and support charitable initiatives such as volunteering and fundraising.

For a full picture of Solihull School, click [here](#).





Recent Developments

In September 2015, the Warwick Road campus saw the addition of The Cooper Building, a new Sixth Form Centre which provides teaching space, private study, social and dining areas, as well as an external roof garden. In 2017, a second floodlit artificial turf pitch was opened to complement the other excellent sporting facilities at the school, and in 2019, the school refurbished its kitchen and refectory.

The school merger in 2020 facilitated a range of facility upgrades on both campuses. At the Senior School, the former Junior School building was repurposed as Senior School classrooms and renamed the Mark Hopton Building.

At the Preparatory School, which includes a Grade 2 listed property, Malvern Hall, as its main reception building, recent investment has included the redevelopment of all teaching spaces for both Junior and Infant School pupils, resurfaced grass playing fields, and improved car parking facilities. The Preparatory School also has a full-sized floodlit artificial turf pitch, a 25m swimming pool and an Arts Centre, incorporating a dance studio and theatre.

The school is currently working on projects to improve its gym and library facilities at the Senior School, further car parking improvements at the Preparatory School and sustainability initiatives on both campuses.



The Opportunity

Solihull School is seeking a Chair of Governors to succeed Mr Damian Kelly, ideally to take up the post by the end of summer 2026.

The Governors are seeking someone with a real commitment to the school and to the education and development of its pupils. The role of Chair of Governors is both stimulating and challenging. The Chair leads for the Governing Body, shaping its role and interactions with the school's leadership and staff and its reputation in the region. This is a tremendous opportunity for a new Chair of Governors at Solihull to:

- Shape the future of the region's leading independent, co-educational school and strengthen its already excellent position in the region's educational landscape
- Develop governance and leadership skills in a dynamic educational environment
- Make a lasting impact on pupils, staff and the broader school community

Though the role is voluntary, non-executive and pro bono, it requires engaged oversight of the strategic development of the school and the skills to support and challenge the Executive Head and the Bursar. The new Chair of Governors will assume their role at a time of unprecedented economic, political and societal challenge for the independent schools sector. Though the school is well placed to manage these challenges and demand for places remains strong, it is not immune to their impact. Therefore, they will need to be robust, rigorous and resourceful.





Governance & Leadership

Solihull School is governed by a Board of Governors who act as Directors of the Company and Trustees of the Charity, overseeing strategic direction, education, finance and premises. The Board is supported by a number of specialised Committees, with day-to-day management of the school vested in the Executive Headmaster, Charles Fillingham, and the School Leadership Team (SLT).

The Board currently comprises 15 members, including the Chair. Their profiles and responsibilities can be viewed [here](#). The Governors have a wide range of professional and educational experience and skills, along with an excellent understanding of the day-to-day operation of the school and its subsidiaries.

Governors are encouraged to visit the school and experience its day-to-day operation on a regular basis.

The current Committee structure is as follows:

- Strategy, Finance & Premises Committee
- Education Committee
- Human Resources Committee
- External Relations Committee
- Safeguarding & Pastoral Committee
- Health & Safety Committees (one for each campus)

The Strategy, Finance & Premises Committee is supported by two Sub-Committees tasked with overseeing the school's £20m investment portfolios, income from which is used to support scholarships and bursaries:

- Property Sub-Committee
- Investments Sub-Committee

Both Full Board and Committee meetings take place four times a year and at least once each term. Additional meetings may be scheduled to address emerging matters or focus on particular strategic issues, and a recent initiative is an annual "strategy away day". While the Chair of Governors is the Chair of the Full Board and currently the Strategy, Finance & Premises Committee, each of the other Committees has its own Chair.

The Bursar is also the Clerk to the Governors to ensure that the Board, its Committees and members have timely and effective information, as well as ensuring compliance with company and charity laws and regulations.

The SLT is led by the Executive Headmaster and currently comprises the Bursar, the Heads of the Senior School and Preparatory School, the Senior and Prep School Deputy Heads (Academic & Pastoral), the Director of External Relationships, and the Pastoral Support Manager, who is the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead. The school is currently recruiting for a Head of Human Resources, who would also be a member of the SLT. The SLT is responsible for the management of the school and works with the Board to exercise its oversight and governance role.



Role Description

The Chair of Governors at Solihull holds a wide-ranging brief, leading the Board of Governors in their roles as Governors, trustees and directors. The Chair will hold overall responsibility for guiding the governance of the school, for oversight of the school's executive function and for the continued success of the organisation. The Chair will ensure that the strategic direction of the school is clear and that key decisions are aligned to the strategy.

The postholder is a person of considerable importance and influence who champions the school while also holding it to account and setting its direction of travel.

Principal Areas of Responsibility

- To ensure the highest possible standards of governance, including the proper and efficient conduct of Board meetings
- To ensure that the Board sets the mission, vision, strategy, and high-level policies for Solihull School within the powers and restrictions of the school's articles
- To take decisions and act in the best interests of the school, with a view across short-, medium- and long-term time horizons
- To serve as a critical friend to the Executive, working in collaboration with and, where appropriate, challenging the Executive Headmaster and Bursar on behalf of the Board
- To oversee Governor suitability, training and attendance, ensuring that Governors are proficient and trained to carry out their duties and responsibilities for regulatory compliance, including but not limited to safeguarding
- To ensure a thorough understanding of responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and child protection issues and have a clear commitment to delivering best practice in safeguarding
- To oversee the Governor Committee structure and membership
- To ensure that the Board takes appropriate steps to monitor identified measures of school performance
- To ensure that the Board gives due care and attention to identifying and mitigating risks facing the school
- To ensure that the school has robust internal systems and controls for all financial and nonfinancial matters which are audited and reviewed regularly
- To ensure the Board focuses on its governance role and does not overreach into a management role
- To meet regularly with the Executive Headmaster, building a supportive, professional relationship, ensuring that he/she understands and tracks key measures of performance, that he/she receives appropriate appraisals, that he/she has adequate opportunity for professional development and that he/she can access the appropriate external professional support
- To lead the Board in the determination of tuition fees and other charges, staff remuneration and, specifically, remuneration of the Executive Headmaster, Bursar, Head of the Senior School and Head of the Preparatory School
- To appoint, where appropriate, Governors and independent panel members to serve on panel hearings as part of the respective processes for reviews, grievances, disciplinary issues, appeals and parental complaints
- To attend and speak at Prize Giving and other school events as appropriate
- When necessary, to lead the Board through the appointment of a new Head and Bursar





Person Specification

The Chair of Governors will be a dynamic and communicative leader, capable of winning trust and thinking strategically. The successful applicant will have a genuine interest in the education of young people, with a commitment to independent education and a passion for excellence in terms of academic standards, pastoral care and co-curricular matters. Beyond these qualities, the next Chair of Governors will demonstrate a commitment to the school, enjoying serving an inclusive, diverse community, with a strong commitment to its Christian ethos, which admits pupils of all faiths and none. Training and a handover will be provided.

Desirable Qualities

- A strategic approach, working with the Board and Senior Executives such that the school delivers against its strategic and operational plans
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills and the ability to foster a collaborative approach
- Strong leadership experience in the commercial or charity sector, ideally with knowledge of chairing committees or a full Board
- An awareness of the political and economic environment in the education sector
- A track record of excellent judgement, unquestionable integrity and objective thinking, even when under pressure
- Strong business acumen, ideally with some financial knowledge/understanding
- Resilience, focus, collegiality and diplomacy
- Attention to detail
- An ability to evaluate risks
- Commitment to the highest standards in safeguarding and regulatory compliance

Application Process

Interested candidates are invited to contact RSAcademics by email to arrange an initial confidential discussion with Louisa Barham or Kate Howe, who are leading the search:

- Louisa Barham, Search Consultant:
louisabarham@rsacademics.com
- Kate Howe, Search Consultant:
katehowe@rsacademics.com

Initial screening will be undertaken by RSAcademics. The school will undertake interviews with selected candidates.

N.B. Safer recruitment checks will be made at all stages in the recruitment process.

RS Academics is a global executive search and consultancy firm working exclusively with schools. For more than 20 years, we've supported governors and leaders at pivotal moments – whether they are appointing senior staff or making complex strategic decisions.

What makes us distinctive is the depth of first-hand experience in schools across our team – as heads, governors, bursars and senior professionals – combined with specialist expertise in areas such as strategy, research, marketing and finance. This blend is continually enriched by our ongoing consultancy and appointments work with schools worldwide, so our advice is always current, practical and evidence led. Please visit www.rsacademics.com for more information.



Because the world needs schools to **thrive**

